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ART. IX.—*Miscellaneous Poems selected from the United States Literary Gazette.* Boston. Cummings, Hilliard, and Co; and Harrison Gray. 18mo. pp. 172.

THIS little volume, as the title imports, is composed of a selection from the poetical department of the United States *Literary Gazette*, embracing the period from the beginning of that work down to the end of the past year. When originally published, these pieces appeared as anonymous contributions, but in the present collection the names of the authors, except in a few instances, are prefixed. The principal contributors are Bryant and Percival; in addition to whom are Longfellow, Mellen, Jones, and Dawes; and, without invidious comparison or exaggerated praise, it may with great truth be said, that there are from each of these writers specimens of much poetical beauty, and that the volume itself is a rich acquisition to the elegant literature of the country. We know not but our partiality for whatever excellence is of American growth, may cause us to feel the more gratified with a work like this, but we would not bestow on it extravagant praise, merely because it is American. Such praise would be injurious to the cause of letters among us. We would not that our poets be easily satisfied, but rather that they aspire to rival the richest strains, which have been breathed from the country of Shakspeare and of Milton. We would have them strictly American; their productions should retain a flavor of the soil in which they were formed. The feelings they express, and the outward forms they portray, should partake of something of the air of the place. But we would not have them pleased with a low measure of excellence; nor would we have our men of genius remain content with moderate merit, because, possibly, moderate merit may be sufficient to meet the immediate and coarser demands of the public.

Mr Bryant, who has contributed the largest number of pieces to the volume before us, has been for several years a favorite with the American public. We have, on former occasions, expressed our opinion of his genius and writings. As a poet, he possesses rare gifts. His poetry has truth, delicacy, and correctness, as well as uncommon vigor and richness; he is always faithful to nature; his delineations are accurate, vivid, and forcible; he selects his groups and images with judgment, and sketches with spirit and exactness. He writes as one, 'who,

in the love of nature, holds communion with her visible forms.' Nothing is borrowed, nothing artificial; his pictures have an air of freshness and originality, which could come from the student of nature alone. He is alive to the beautiful forms of the outward world. These forms hold a language to his heart. Nature to him is not an inert mass, mere dead matter; it is almost a feeling, and a sentiment. His poetry is always refreshing; the scenes of stillness and repose, into which he introduces us, seem fitted to exclude care and sorrow; he draws us from haunts of men, where we become familiar with loathsome forms of vice and misery, where our hearts are torn with anxiety, or wounded by neglect and ingratitude, and makes us 'partake of the deep contentment,' which the mute scenes of earth breathe. He is less the poet of artificial life, than of nature, and the feelings. There is something for the heart, as well as for the understanding and fancy, in all he writes; something, which touches our sensibility, and awakens deep toned, sacred reflections.

Again, Mr Bryant charms us by his simplicity. Like all true lovers of nature, he is fond of those chaste beauties, which strike on the heart at once, and are incapable of being heightened by any extraneous ornament. His pictures are never overcharged. Nothing is turgid or meretricious, strange or fantastic. His heart is open to the healthful influences of nature; he muses among her gay and beautiful forms, and throws out upon the world his visions and feelings in a garb of attractive simplicity and grace. His strains, moreover, are exquisitely finished. He leaves nothing crude and imperfect; he throws off no hasty sketches, no vague, shadowy, and ill assorted images. His portraits have a picturesque distinctness; the outlines are accurately traced, and the colors laid on with delicacy and skill. We are never disgusted with grossness; nothing appears overstrained or feeble, deformed, misshapen, or out of place.

To write such poetry at any time would be no trifling distinction. Mr Bryant deserves the greater praise, as he has exhibited a pure and classical standard in an age, the tendency of which is, in some respects, towards lawless fanaticism and wildness. There is a fashion in literature, as in everything else. The popular style is now the rapid, the hasty, the abrupt, and unfinished. The age is certainly not a superficial one. It is distinguished beyond any former period for habits of deep, earnest thought. But one of its characteristics seems to be an impatience of restraint. It is fond of strong excitement, however produced.

Whatever excites the mind into a state of fervor, whatever powerfully awakens the feelings, is listened to and applauded. It may be vague, fantastic, and shapeless, produced by a sort of extemporaneous effort, and sent abroad without the labor of revision. It will not have the less chance of becoming, for a time at least, popular. The press was never more prolific than at present. A great deal is written, and, as might be naturally supposed, much is written in haste. The mass of popular literature is swelling to an overgrown bulk ; but much of it is crude, coarse, and immature. Mr Bryant has not been seduced by the temptations to slovenliness and negligence, which the age holds out to view ; but, on the contrary, he affords a happy specimen of genuine, classical English. We are gratified to meet with such examples, especially among the distinguished and favored poets of our own country. It augurs well for the interests of taste and letters.

We cannot express in too strong terms our approbation of the moral and devotional spirit, that breathes from all, which Mr Bryant writes. Poetry, which is conversant with the deeper feelings of the heart, as well as the beautiful forms of outward nature, has, we conceive, certain affinities with devotion. It is connected with all our higher and holier emotions, and should send out an exalting, a healing, and sustaining influence. We are pleased to find such an influence pervading every strain, uttered by a poet of so much richness of fancy, of so much power and sweetness, as Mr Bryant. No sentiment or expression ever drops from him, which the most rigid moralist would wish to blot. His works we may put into the hands of youth, confident, that in proportion as they become familiar with them, the best sympathies of their nature will be strengthened, and the moral taste be rendered more refined and delicate. Much of his poetry is description ; but his descriptions are fitted to ‘ instruct our piety,’ and impart a warmth and glow of moral feeling.

We hasten to one or two extracts, as contained in the volume before us. ‘The Murdered Traveller’ is picturesque, affecting, and solemn. The scene is portrayed with a distinctness, which causes the heart to shudder.

When Spring to woods and wastes around,  
Brought bloom and joy again ;  
The murdered traveller’s bones were found,  
Far down a narrow glen.

The fragrant birch, above him, hung  
Her tassels in the sky ;  
And many a vernal blossom sprung,  
And nodded, careless, by.

The red bird warbled, as he wrought  
His hanging nest o'erhead,  
And fearless near the fatal spot,  
Her young the partridge led.

But there was weeping far away,  
And gentle eyes, for him,  
With watching many an anxious day,  
Grew sorrowful and dim.

They little knew, who loved him so,  
The fearful death he met,  
When shouting o'er the desert snow,  
Unarmed, and hard beset.

Nor how, when round the frosty pole  
The northern dawn was red,  
The mountain wolf and wild cat stole  
To banquet on the dead.

Nor how, when strangers found his bones,  
They dressed the hasty bier,  
And marked his grave with nameless stones,  
Unmoistened by a tear.

But long they looked, and feared, and wept,  
Within his distant home ;  
And dreamed, and started as they slept,  
For joy that he was come.

So long they looked—but never spied  
His welcome step again,  
Nor knew the fearful death he died  
Far down that narrow glen. pp. 9, 10.

We need not point out to those, who are familiar with the appearance of our forests in spring, the exquisite truth and beauty of the two lines,

‘ The fragrant birch, above him, hung  
Her tassels in the sky ;’

which occur in the second stanza. Such minute and inimitable beauties are scattered over every page of this author's narrative and descriptive poetry. They go to show his careful observation

of nature, which we consider one of his striking characteristics, and which constitutes one point of resemblance between him and Cowper. We add, it is his habit of minute and diligent observation, which renders his pictures so purely American. His descriptions have a definite locality. They apply to American scenery, and to no other.

The 'Hymn' is a rich offering of the fancy and heart. The following are the introductory lines.

The groves were God's first temples. Ere man learned  
To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave,  
And spread the roof above them,—ere he framed  
The lofty vault, to gather and roll back  
The sound of anthems; in the darkling wood,  
Amidst the cool and silence, he knelt down  
And offered to the Mightiest, solemn thanks  
And supplication. For his simple heart  
Might not resist the sacred influences,  
That, from the stilly twilight of the place,  
And from the gray old trunks that high in heaven  
Mingled their mossy boughs, and from the sound  
Of the invisible breath that swayed at once  
All their green tops, stole o'er him, and bowed  
His spirit with the thought of boundless power  
And inaccessible majesty. Ah, why  
Should we, in the world's riper years, neglect  
God's ancient sanctuaries, and adore  
Only among the crowd, and under roofs  
That our frail hands have raised. Let me, at least,  
Here, in the shadow of this aged wood,  
Offer one hymn—thrice happy, if it find  
Acceptance in his ear. p. 43.

We assure our readers, that much of what Mr Bryant has contributed to the present collection, is as good as that we have here offered them. We will not undertake to point out passages of the greatest beauty. The true lover of poetry will be at no loss in discovering them.

Of Mr Percival, who, next to Mr Bryant, is the largest contributor, less needs be said here, as we have in the preceding pages of our present number spoken somewhat at length concerning him. He has copiousness, we may say exuberance, both of matter and words; a rich and excursive imagination, which delights to revel amid gorgeous and airy forms of beauty; and often throws off lines of great vigor and sweetness. He has

happy moments of inspiration, and with more labor of revision, with greater willingness to reject what serves only to embarrass the sense, and more care in selecting from the wilderness of 'thick coming fancies' only what is adapted to his purpose, he might exert a magic influence over our hearts. His narratives are apt to be overloaded or perplexed. The consequence is, the attention is encumbered or distracted, and the impression weakened. His contributions to this volume, as well as his other works, bear the stamp of true genius, but show too frequent marks of carelessness in the execution.

After all, Mr Percival's poetry is of a fascinating character. Amid his negligent versification, his wildness and redundancy, he has strains of surpassing beauty. The pieces he has contributed to the present collection bear the characteristic traits of his genius, though they are not chargeable with all the faults, which disfigure some of his larger productions. Several of them are lofty and beautiful creations.

'The Graves of the Patriots,' though not altogether faultless in expression, contains bursts of genuine and exalted feeling. The lines on 'Spring' are gay and airy, and the progress of the Zephyr fancifully described. 'The Desolate City' is fearfully impressive. Of the piece entitled, 'Painting—a Personification,' we give the opening and concluding parts.

One bright sunshiny autumn day,  
When the leaves were just beginning to fade,  
I saw a gay and laughing maid  
Stand by the side of a public way.

There she stood erect and tall;  
Her flowery cheek had caught the dyes  
Of the earliest dawn—and O! her eyes,  
Not a star that shoots or flies,  
But those dark eyes outshine them all.

She stood with a long and slender wand,  
With a tassel of hair at its pointed tip;  
And fast as the dews from a forest drip,  
When a summer shower has bathed the land,  
So quick a thousand colors came,  
Darting along like shapes of flame,  
At every turn of her gliding hand.

She gave a form to the bodiless air,  
And clear as a mirrored sheet it lay;

And phantoms would come and pass away,  
As her magical rod was pointed there.

First, the shape of a budding rose,  
Just unfolding its tender leaf;  
Then, all unbound its virgin zone,  
Full in its pride and beauty blown,  
It heavily hangs like a nodding sheaf;  
And a cloud of perfume around it flows.

Now for the touch of a master hand—  
See! how she poises and waves her wand,  
As if in a dream of busy thought  
She sought for visions and found them not.  
Now it rises—and look—what power  
Springs to life, as she lifts her rod—  
Is it a hero, or visible god,  
Or bard in his rapt and gifted hour?  
What a lofty and glorious brow,  
Bent like a temple's towering arch,  
As if that a wondering world might march  
To the altar of mind, and kneel and bow;—  
And then what a deep and spirited eye,  
Quick as a quivering orb of fire,  
Changing and shifting from love to ire,  
Like the lights in a summer evening sky;—  
Then the living and breathing grace  
Sent from the whole of that magic face,  
The eloquent play of his lips, the smile  
Sporting in sunbeams there awhile,  
Then with the throb of passion pressed  
Like a shivering leaf that cannot rest,—  
And still as a lake when it waits a storm,  
That wraps the mountain's giant form,  
When they lie in the shade of his awful frown,  
And his gathered brows are wrinkled down.

Such the visions that breathe and live,  
The playful touch of her wand can give.

pp. 116, 117, 120, 121.

The beauty of the above extract is marred by occasional slovenliness of execution. We refer particularly to the description of the changing expression of the lips, in the last eight or ten lines, which is clumsy and perplexed.

Among Mr Percival's other pieces, 'The Last Song of the



Greek Patriot,' and 'Grecian Liberty,' breathe a stern feeling of patriotism, and contain much spirited and glowing description. 'Italy, a Conference,' has some passages of great luxuriance and beauty. But we can afford no more extracts.

Among the contributions furnished to this volume by others, there is much good poetry, and we are gratified with their appearance, not merely as they serve to swell our stock of native poetry, but as they hold out the promise of better things hereafter. There is, in particular, a good deal of poetical feeling and imagery in the pieces contributed by Mr Longfellow. He is generally flowing, manly, and correct; but he occasionally allows a feeble line, or negligent expression, to have place. We do not think that the two lines,

'Why comes he not? Alas! I should  
Reclaim him still, if weeping could,' p. 114.

are in the best style of versification. The auxiliaries *should* and *could*, employed as rhyming words, give the couplet an appearance of poverty and feebleness. We could point to other occasional blemishes, but these weigh little in comparison with the author's prevailing merits. The following stanzas purporting to have been a 'Hymn of the Moravian Nuns, at the Consecration of Pulaski's Banner,' have been much and justly admired.

When the dying flame of day  
Through the chancel shot it ray,  
Far the glimmering tapers shed  
Faint light on the cowed head,  
And the censer burning swung,  
Where before the altar hung  
That proud banner, which with prayer  
Had been consecrated there.

And the nuns' sweet hymn was heard the while,  
Sung low in the dim, mysterious aisle.

Take thy banner!—may it wave  
Proudly o'er the good and brave,  
When the battle's distant wail  
Breaks the sabbath of our vale,—  
When the clarion's music thrills  
To the hearts of these lone hills,—  
When the spear in conflict shakes,  
And the strong lance shivering breaks.

Take thy banner!—and beneath  
The war cloud's encircling wreath,

Guard it—till our homes are free—  
 Guard it—God will prosper thee !  
 In the dark and trying hour,  
 In the breaking forth of power,  
 In the rush of steeds and men,  
 His right hand will shield thee then.

Take thy banner ! But when night  
 Closes round the ghastly fight,  
 If the vanquished warrior bow,  
 Spare him !—by our holy vow,  
 By our prayers and many tears,  
 By the mercy that endears,  
 Spare him—he our love hath shared—  
 Spare him—as thou wouldst be spared !

Take thy banner !—and if e'er  
 Thou shouldst press the soldier's bier,  
 And the muffled drum should beat  
 To the tread of mournful feet,  
 Then this crimson flag shall be  
 Martial cloak and shroud for thee !

And the warrior took that banner proud,  
 And it was his martial cloak and shroud. pp. 58—60.

Mr Jones's versification is generally easy and correct, and his conceptions sprightly, and sometimes vigorous, His 'Autumnal Hymn of the Husbandman' is characterized by great simplicity of language. Much plainness, and perhaps occasional homeliness of thought and expression, are permitted or required by the subject. We think, however, that in his attempt to attain the utmost degree of simplicity, this writer has been occasionally betrayed into the use of expressions, which good taste would modify or reject. As a specimen of Mr Jones's manner, we quote the hymn entire.

Now we rest from our toils, Lord, our labors are done,  
 Our meadows are bared to the kiss of the sun ;  
 We have winnowed the wheat,—well our toil it repays,  
 And our oxen have eaten the husks of the maize.

We gathered our harvests ; with strength in each limb  
 Toiled the mower ; the ripe grass bowed prostrate to him ;  
 And the reaper, as nimbly he felled the proud grain,  
 Was blither than those who wear sceptres and reign.

And the wheat blade was tall, and the full, golden ear  
 Proclaimed that the months of rejoicing were near ;

The grape in rich clusters hung, promising mirth,  
And the boughs of the apple tree slept on the earth.

Did we thank thee, then, God of the seasons ? Oh no !  
We were prompt in accepting thy favors, but slow  
Were our lips to give thanks for the rich gifts, thy hand  
Showered thick on the maize littered vales of our land.

Thou hast rained on us manna, Lord,—yet we are mute ;  
Though summers, all smiles, of thy love are the fruit,  
Springs and autumns, as fair as the Orient boasts,  
Dawn on us,—yet faint are our tongues, Lord of Hosts !

Now we raise our glad voices—in gratitude raise,  
And we waft on the beams of the morning our praise ;  
We thank thee for golden grain gathered in shock,  
And the milk of the kine, and the fleece of the flock.

And we thank thee for limbs moving light to the task,  
For hearts beating high, though unwarmed of the flask,  
Fill us, Lord, with just sense of thy bounty, and give  
Health to us, and to all in the land where we live.

pp. 110, 111.

The following stanzas by Mr Dawes will be enough to prove,  
that he has the imagination and taste of a poet.

#### THE SPIRIT OF BEAUTY.

The Spirit of Beauty unfurls her light,  
And wheels her course in a joyous flight ;  
I know her track through the balmy air,  
By the blossoms that cluster and whiten there ;  
She leaves the tops of the mountains green,  
And gems the valley with crystal sheen.

At morn, I know where she rested at night,  
For the roses are gushing with dewy delight ;  
Then she mounts again, and around her flings  
A shower of light from her purple wings,  
Till the spirit is drunk with the music on high,  
That silently fills it with ecstasy !

At noon, she hies to a cool retreat,  
Where bowering elms over waters meet ;  
She dimples the wave, where the green leaves dip,  
That smiles, as it curls, like a maiden's lip,  
When her tremulous bosom would hide, in vain,  
From her lover, the hope that she loves again.

At eve, she hangs o'er the western sky  
 Dark clouds for a glorious canopy ;  
 And round the skirts of each sweeping fold,  
 She paints a border of crimson and gold,  
 Where the lingering sunbeams love to stay,  
 When their god in his glory has passed away.

She hovers around us at twilight hour,  
 When her presence is felt with the deepest power ;  
 She mellows the landscape, and crowds the stream  
 With shadows that flit like a fairy dream ;—  
 Still wheeling her flight through the gladsome air,  
 The Spirit of Beauty is everywhere ! pp. 54, 55.

Mr Mellen's fancy appears to delight in scenes of grandeur and wildness. The following lines on 'Mount Washington, the loftiest peak of the White Mountains in New Hampshire,' are not destitute of spirit and energy. We refer to the two first stanzas and the last ; the third, which speaks of the 'dim forms of the mighty dead,' we do not profess to understand, and consider it an essential defect in a description, otherwise striking and natural.

Mount of the clouds ; on whose Olympian height  
 The tall rocks brighten in the ether air,  
 And spirits from the skies come down at night,  
 To chant immortal songs to Freedom there !  
 Thine is the rock of other regions ; where  
 The world of life which blooms so far below  
 Sweeps a wide waste ; no gladdening scenes appear,  
 Save where with silvery flash the waters flow  
 Beneath the far off mountain, distant, calm, and slow.

Thine is the summit where the clouds repose,  
 Or eddying wildly round thy cliffs are borne ;  
 When Tempest mounts his rushing car, and throws  
 His billowy mist amid the thunder's home !  
 Far down the deep ravines the whirlwinds come,  
 And bow the forests as they sweep along ;  
 While roaring deeply from their rocky womb  
 The storms come forth—and hurrying darkly on,  
 Amid the echoing peaks the revelry prolong !

And when the tumult of the air is fled,  
 And quenched in silence all the tempest flame,  
 There come the dim forms of the mighty dead,  
 Around the steep which bears the hero's name.

The stars look down upon them—and the same  
Pale orb that glistens o'er his distant grave,  
Gleams on the summit that enshrines his fame.  
And lights the cold tear of the glorious brave—  
The richest, purest tear, that memory ever gave !

Mount of the clouds ! when winter round thee throws  
The hoary mantle of the dying year,  
Sublime amid thy canopy of snows,  
Thy towers in bright magnificence appear !  
'Tis then we view thee with a chilling fear,  
Till summer robes thee in her tints of blue ;  
When lo ! in softened grandeur, far, yet clear,  
Thy battlements stand clothed in Heaven's own hue,  
To swell as Freedom's home on man's unbounded view !  
pp. 128, 129.

Some of the anonymous pieces in this collection have merits, that would bear a critical examination. But we choose to refer our readers to the volume itself, and this we do with the entire conviction, that all lovers of poetry will find abundance in its pages to reward a diligent perusal.

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